

# Ethnic Diversity and Creative Urban Practice: The Case of Bradford's Mughal Garden<sup>1</sup>

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*This paper examines the significance of the construction of a Mughal garden within a nineteenth-century civic park in the northern English city of Bradford. We explore the semiotic environment of the streetscape in the surrounding inner city area of Manningham in which Lister Park is located. The framing discourse surrounding Manningham has defined it as a multiethnic area with a reputation of suffering from inner-city decline and ethnic tension. This context is significant for any reading of the streetscape within this area. It is argued that the signage, street furniture and local inhabitants / residents give this area a strong sense of its predominantly Pakistani heritage population. At the same time, the architecture in this area reflects both the nineteenth-century heritage of industry and Christianity into which more recently there have arrived visible aspects of Muslim culture and lifestyle. It is into this territorial context that the local council placed a contemporary representation of a traditional Mughal garden. The article explores the background of this process and examines the cultural symbolism and value of this garden for its varied users.*

## Introduction

This paper provides an account of the planning background to the development of an innovatory architectural statement that sought to respond to the changed

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ethnic demography of the potential user population of an inner city area. We firstly examine the context in which an inner city area – Manningham in Bradford, England – with a reputation as a problematic ‘Muslim ghetto’ (see Simpson 2007; Burlet & Reid 1998) has in fact an urban streetscape and social life that *de facto* belies this stereotype. This inner city has a numerically significant population<sup>2</sup> of South Asian heritage, and Muslim faith, who have built a community in this area over 50 years. For many of these residents, therefore, Manningham is a familiar area with family attachments across generations. Furthermore, there is also an active commitment to the area as a place that provides the infrastructural necessities that sustains cultural identity through the provision of culturally relevant foodstuffs, clothing and other community resources. As an inner city area with a prior history as a place of settlement for Irish and Polish communities (Taylor & Gibson 2010), it has much of the character of a traditional *zone of transition*. Today, Manningham has a very strong established presence of people of Muslim, Pakistani heritage who have in recent years been complemented by a new influx of Polish migrant workers, other Eastern European migrants, and some asylum seekers from Iraq and elsewhere.

Consequently Manningham within Bradford, and probably over a wider area, is well known as a place in which a diversity of ethnic minority goods is available: this includes food and clothing, as well as literature and music that address distinctive cultural needs. This infrastructure has been a means of the Muslim community retaining a capacity for sustaining their faith and diasporic identities; and consequently the emergence over time of mosques, madrasas and schools has been integral to making Manningham an area that has substantial appeal to its largest faith minority. The physical presence of this cultural infrastructure in the form of buildings with specific ethnic identities and typically with appropriate signage has added significantly to the construction of the *South Asian / Muslim gestalt* that frames the perception of the area.

At the same time Manningham has acquired a deeply entrenched *reputation* in wider Bradford and elsewhere as being an ‘edgy place’ where inter-ethnic rivalries are likely to result in hostility and even violence: and more generally this is seen as an area in which the former majority white population have become a minority presence. Manningham has over the last fifty years been associated with prostitution, drug abuse, the ‘underclass’ and squalid social housing, and with immigrant tensions including riots (Bagguley & Hussain 2008). Thus, at various times the substantive reality may have provided a veridical basis for these stereotypes, but the dissolute reputation of Manningham in the popular imagination has always

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2 The Pakistani and Bangladeshi population, almost entirely Muslim, was 75,188 at the 2001 census, approximately 16% of the city’s population (<http://www.ons.gov.uk>). It’s worth noting, however, that these numbers have increased due to natural growth and in migrations of non-South Asian Muslims from Europe, North and Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Middle East.

been a florid exaggeration of reality: often nurtured by local and national political ideologies and interests.

Thus in this paper we must note the circulation of popular discourses in which a particular inner-city area of a city in Northern England construct an image of Manningham as being outside the comfort zone of the majority white population. It is a necessary recognition of the social construction of a specific urban area as being populated by 'the other' and being permeated by tropes of both the exotic and the dangerous. We will demonstrate that in a deeply multiethnic area there are competing semiotic signifiers of ethnic identity through the 'Englishness' of the banal content of street signage and through the contrasting presence of 'Asian' shop signage. Individual street signs and shop-front signage may be regarded as units of semiotic meaning in the streetscape (Gorter 2006) but the cumulative assemblage of visual signs in an area may be regarded as constituting a *Gestalt* (Ben-Rafael *et al.* 2006, 8). It is exactly this recurrent presence of linguistic and visual cues that marks Manningham as an inner-city area that possesses a strong and distinctive ethnic character. It is in the context of this popular perception of Manningham as a multiethnic area that we will examine the introduction of a Mughal garden into a quintessentially nineteenth-century civic park that borders this area.

The linguistic marking of areas such as Manningham as *ghettoes* in the national discourse of urban social cohesion is also noted in relation to the framing of this area and its population (see Cantle 2008, 14). The national discourse since 2001 on 'community cohesion' and the assertion that British Muslim populations live in 'parallel cultures' and practice a politics of 'self-segregation' has made the banal presence of ethnic difference, and particularly Muslim difference, highly salient to the majority population (Ouseley 2001; Phillips 2005; see Husband & Alam 2011 for an overview). Thus, the streetscapes such as those in inner city Bradford are likely to be read with a heightened awareness of ethnic identities; and of territory. Reciprocally, the rise of Islamophobia in the United Kingdom has made more salient the faith identity of the local South Asian populations, as Muslims, whereas at an earlier point they would have predominantly seen their identities defined through their diasporic experience as being Pakistani, Bangladeshi or, at the local/regional level, as either Mirpuri or Sylheti correspondingly.

In our discussion, we will sketch the current status of banal life within the mundane streetscape of Manningham based on recent fieldwork carried out under the aegis of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft funded project. This account will provide a context for properly understanding the imagination that underlay the proposal to develop a Mughal garden in Lister Park:<sup>3</sup> a large nineteenth-century Victorian civic park that tracks one boundary of Manningham. The descriptive

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3 Also known as 'Manningham Park'.

account of the streetscape of Manningham will itself lead us to consider the civic context of planning and civic policy which shapes this environment; and this theme will be followed through our account of the development and utilisation of the innovative Mughal Garden.

## The City Context

Bradford is a major city in West Yorkshire, in the North of England. Now part of a large metropolitan authority, it incorporates other distinct townships such as Keighley, Shipley and Ilkley, with their own demographic profiles and histories. The city of Bradford itself has a proud history and a particular current visibility in the national imagination. Like many towns and cities in England, Bradford's current physical fabric owes much to the radical transformations that were carried out in the construction of urban Britain during the industrial revolution. Located south of the still largely rural, and scenic Yorkshire Dales, Bradford too is built into the steep hillsides of valleys that flow into what is now the city centre. Coming to Bradford from the major East–West motorway (the M62) a linking motorway (the M606) is accessed until Bradford is entered, as it were, from above. Looking down from what would have been hilltops across the urban spread of Bradford, an immediate impression that may impact upon the unfamiliar visitor is the strong assertion of faith and industry. For, the striking feature from above remains Manningham Mills: a massive nineteenth-century textile mill whose huge stone chimney dominates the city skyline. Its assertion of the centrality of the textile trade to the history of Bradford is echoed by the still-visible stone mill buildings that, despite a creative combination of arson and redevelopment over the last forty years, remain visible and lasting reminders of the previous dominance of the textile industry in Bradford's fortunes. A second immanent visual impression takes shape through observation of the number of iconic religious structures. Seen from above, one cannot fail to observe the juxtaposition of church spires, minarets and cupolas that speak of the significant presence of non-Christian faiths. These first impressions do not deceive, for in fact Bradford is heavily marked by an industrial, predominantly textile, past which has helped shaped the city's current multiethnic demography.

In the nineteenth century Bradford expanded rapidly and successfully as a centre of textile manufacturing. Its pre-eminence in this field brought to Bradford the very significant wealth that became expressed in the large stone-built mill properties, and in the mix of spacious stone built Victorian genteel housing for the bourgeoisie, and the ranks of back-to-back housing for the factory labour force (Taylor & Gibson 2010). The civic virtues that accompanied this era of commercial capital accumulation became concrete in such expansive architectural statements as the City Hall, St. George's Hall, and Cartwright Hall (a museum and art gallery

standing in Lister Park). This era provided a great deal of the urban fabric that lies at the heart of this analysis.

However, the twentieth century has not been so generous to Bradford as new international competition, that was central to the developing globalisation of trade, progressively, and then dramatically in the 1970s, tore the heart out of Bradford's industrial base. The textile industry imploded and the migrant workers that had been brought into Bradford to service this industry found themselves at the forefront of the consequent collapse in employment. Families that had developed from the initial arrival of predominantly single men into multi-occupied dwellings around the mills in the 1960s now find themselves as first, second and the third generation Britons living in a Bradford in which employment is a major challenge. Communities that had developed through a cumulative process of migration and family reunion spanning thirty years and more have shaped the creation of distinct neighbourhoods that, typically, strongly reflect specific points of origin in Pakistan or Bangladesh (Hiro 1966; Phillips *et al.* 2009: 12). These communities and their neighbourhoods in the inner city of Bradford, have like all immigrant communities, attracted hostility from segments of the majority population. Since 9/11 the Islamic status of a large majority of these Pakistani-British Bradfordians (see Alam & Husband 2006; Alam 2006) has given a heightened significance to their faith as a marker of their difference.

Nor in fact does this recent visibility of the Muslim population in Bradford emerge from their past neglect in the public gaze. In the mid-1980s the issue of halal meals in state schools in Bradford achieved national visibility, as did the major struggle between the Pakistani parents of children in Drummond Middle School over the views of the headmaster, Ray Honeyford. What became known as 'the Honeyford Affair'<sup>4</sup> came to be something of a national *cause celebre* involving Margaret Thatcher and her government (Halstead 1988). Not long after this, Bradford again figured dramatically within the international furore over the 'Rushdie Affair' (Appignanesi & Maitland 1988; Ruthven 1990). Following the burning of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in Bradford's city centre: *Bradford* became, 'partly as an accident of timing, the newly discovered citadel of Muslim radicalism.' (Akhtar 1989, 43).

Subsequently the 'British credentials' of Bradford's Muslim population were brought into question in the media during the First Gulf War of 1990–91, while

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4 In early 1984, Ray Honeyford, a Headmaster at Drummond Middle School in Bradford, wrote an article for a right leaning magazine, *The Salisbury Review*, exploring education and ethnicity in which he asserted, amongst other points, that the presence of black and minority ethnic children had an adverse impact on the educational attainment of white, 'British' children. The controversy came to include protests from local parents, a call for the Headmasters's resignation from Bradford's, and Britain's, first Asian Lord Mayor, as well as support for him from the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who invited Honeyford to a 'private lunch in 10 Downing Street'. (Oldman 1987, 29.)

the riots of 1995 and 2001 provided further opportunity for the 'problematic'<sup>5</sup> status of Bradford's Muslim populations to be further questioned. Additionally this 'incident led' basis for regarding the whole of the Muslim population of Bradford as problematic resulted in a second layer of the representation of their 'problematic difference' through television, literature and the cinema as authors sought credibility and context for their scenarios by situating their narratives in the context of multiethnic Bradford. The media in Britain, national and local, have had a significant role in the persuasive normalisation of a range of inherently anti-Muslim discourse and imagery (Poole 2002; Poole & Richardson 2006; Morey & Yaqin 2011). In this socio-political context, Manningham, an area in the heart of the city, became identified in the public mind as the iconic expression of the challenge of Islam in Britain.

## Manningham

Manningham is a district in central Bradford. In the nineteenth century it still had a rather middle-class character, although it contained the biggest textile factory in the whole British Empire: a manufacturing base surrounded by workers' accommodation. In the second half of the twentieth century the wealthier and often much larger residences were converted into small flats for workers. Labour immigration, above all from West Pakistan and to a lesser extent from the Indian states of Punjab and Gujarat as well as from East Pakistan (to become independent as Bangladesh in 1971), increased hugely after 1968 and has made Manningham today a centre of the presence of Muslims in Bradford: approximately 70 percent of the population in Manningham and 16 percent in the city as a whole (<http://www.ons.gov.uk>). Finney and Simpson (2009) have shown that Bradford's Muslim populations have experienced internal processes of economic change. This process has seen the development of an affluent minority, many (but by no means all) of whom have chosen to move out of Manningham.

Writing in 2005, the authors of the *Manningham Masterplan* stated, that

With an unemployment rate within the study area of 8.72% double the District rate of 4.37% and much higher than the regional rate of 3.7% (Source 2001 Census), it is not surprising that nearly three quarters of residents feel that a lack of job opportunities is a major issue in Manningham. (Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Yorkshire Forward 2005, 36)

Beyond this baseline, there are further details that shed further light on the socio-economic position of Manningham's black and ethnic minority (BME) populations.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, one recurring aspect of the status of Muslims in Britain, and the 'West' more generally, was their purported irreconcilability with non-Western values and ways of life.



For example, the economically active proportion of the population is lower than the average for the city as a whole and the same applies to the qualification structure of the economically active population in Manningham compared to Bradford as a whole. In 2011 Phillips *et al.* reported that in Manningham and the adjacent ward of Girdlington housing tenure was: '51% owner occupation, 28% social rental, and 21% private rental' (Phillips *et al.* 2010, 13). Manningham is an area with a very diverse housing stock (Fig. 1); ranging from short rows of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century cottages that have become embedded in streets of nineteenth-century working class terraces built rapidly to house the expanding population of textile workers. Interspersed across the area are handsome streets, squares and crescents of substantial bourgeois housing that have now often been converted for multiple occupation.

**Figure 1. A 19th century terrace: enlarged by the addition of dormer windows. Photo: C. Husband.**



In 2007 the streets of working-class housing surrounding the old textiles factories in the area were complemented by the conversion of Manningham Mills into luxury flats – a development which, not least because of the surrounding wall and the police headquarters opposite, has aspects of a gated community; and thus offers a new layer of housing demarcation into the existing mix of properties in the area. At the same time, over the last decade at least, a further transformation can be observed occurring in the local economy. Pakistanis are achieving business success no longer only in the catering trade (curry houses) and the taxi

business, but also for example in retailing, tourism and music. The local schools are increasingly dominated numerically by the ethnic minority and the University of Bradford in the adjacent inner city district today attracts a large number of local students of Pakistani heritage. Manningham also elects local Asian politicians to the city council. It is in sum an inner-city area with high levels of social deprivation, a mixed housing stock and a multiethnic resident population. In the twenty-first century, Manningham continues to act as a place of settlement for new migrant populations; and currently has a significant presence of new immigrants from the recent accession states of the European Union: particularly from Poland. It is a distinctly multiethnic inner city area that has a visibly predominant presence of people with a South Asian heritage.

This is an area that has a capacity to attract strong bonds of attachment from its residents. Because of the distinctive neighbourhood cultural infrastructure, it serves *cosmopolitan* white residents as well as the settled members of the local Pakistani communities who believe that this is an area in which they can ‘feel safe’ (see Phillips 2007). However, to the majority population of Bradford, and in the national media, Manningham has been seen as representing the urban dislocation and sense of pervasive threat that has become a stereotypical representation of Islam in the inner cities of Britain: characterised by their perceived ‘self-segregation’ and habit of ‘living parallel cultural lives’ (see, for example Ouseley 2001; Cattle 2008). Thus, the local community dynamics that encapsulate the story of the Mughal Garden cover a time frame from its planning in 1996 to its current usage in 2012. This period charts a Bradford, and Manningham, framed by issues of ethnic identities constructed through the language of racism, multiculturalism and local issues around schooling and policing, to a current situation where the dominant discursive trope is that of Islam, assimilation and counter-terrorism.

## The Streetscape of Manningham

City walkers traverse interlacing ‘grids of difference’ and find themselves taking up particular subject positions in relation to the various (religiously, ethnically, or class-based) communities and spaces that organise their spatial trajectories. As their footsteps narrate urban stories – fixing, assembling, traversing, and transforming urban boundaries – urban travellers become active participants in the production of difference, identity and citizenship. (Secor 2004, 358)

Set against the externally imposed image of Manningham as an alien and ‘edgy’ ghetto, many hours of fieldwork walking<sup>6</sup> through the area provides the basis for a very different sense of the built environment. The prevailing sense that arises from walking through the area is of quiet domestication; with the housing being in

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6 This walker is male, white, and stereotypically ‘English’ looking.



good repair and the front gardens tidy, and lacking the detritus of old furniture and domestic rubbish that might be expected of this mythic ghetto. Similarly it is difficult to find any graffiti: this is not an area scarred by a proliferation of gang tags and random aerosol paint abuse. The streets are also singularly lacking in litter: and this includes the back lanes behind the closely built nineteenth-century terraces. By the standards of contemporary urban inner city zones, occupied by people of predominantly relatively poor personal income, this is an area that stands in contradiction to the dominant stereotype of urban malaise. This may to some extent reflect the impact of the local expression of such national policies as *New Deal for Communities*, and *the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* where national funding was made available to local authorities to address the challenge of neighbourhood malaise. Certainly Bradford Metropolitan Authority has addressed itself to the physical fabric of Manningham through a number of initiatives: and there is evidence that such initiatives can have a positive effect (see for example, Power 2009; Tunstall & Coulter 2006; DCLG 2010).

### Signage

Since this is an area of predominantly South Asian, Muslim settlement we might reasonably consider the extent to which the streetscape reflects their demographic dominance and marks the terrain as theirs (Fig. 2). Certainly the shops in the area are predominantly, and visibly, in South Asian ownership; but their signage does not exclude the majority white population (Fig 3.). Very frequently (most often), the shop signs are in English and will declare the premise as a Halal butcher or as a 'food store'; and where the dominant text is not in English, an English equivalent will be adjacent to it. Indeed in Manningham, as elsewhere in Bradford, Pakistani owned commercial premises are increasingly employing a signage that reveals nothing of the ethnicity of the ownership. In terms of the toponymy of the street names the power of the 'banal naming practices' of the local authority (Rose-Redwood & Alderman 2011) have historically laid down a linguistic terrain redolent of English imperial history with for example streets named after successful nineteenth-century military leaders; and the taken for granted status of Christianity is echoed in the saints names such as St. Paul's Road and St. Mary's Road among others, at the heart of the area. The signscape of Manningham provides the walker with a polysemic semiotic environment that is fully capable of partisan interpretation. For the person of Muslim/Pakistani heritage there is here a familiar re-assertion of this as being a terrain in which a familiar and comfortable belonging can be asserted. Its cultural resonance with their diasporic identity makes Manningham comfortably home. The same signscape for the white majority *cosmopolitan*, along with the other *ethnic* features of clothing, foodstuffs and other elements of the streetscene, provides a welcome sense of *différance* (Hall 1993; 1997). This is place where they can celebrate their relish for the enriching possibilities of a multicultural

neighbourhood. Yet again, for the xenophobic or racist member of the majority community this streetscape is redolent of the sense of symbolic and realistic threat (Stephan & Stephan 1996; Stephan *et al.* 2005). It is a terrain stripped of the mythic monoculturalism that they have retained as a definitive marker of their ownership of this territory and this city.

Figure 2. Sign attached to a Madrasah. Photo: C. Husband.



Figure 3. Shop signage on Oak Lane. Photo: C. Husband.



Something of the friability and negotiability of signage is indicated in Hall and Datta's (2010) account of Walworth Road in London. They argue that:

The distribution and valuation of capital through visual signscapes on the Walworth Road, and its possibilities of exchange are not objective, but actors on the street are quickly able to learn the 'rules of the game', (Bourdieu 2002), that are implicitly agreed upon... A key feature of these signages is that they are contingent upon the particular combination of social, cultural and economic capital vested in both entrepreneurs and clients. (Hall & Datta 2010, 71)

Notably in Bradford the signscape clearly suggests that the owners of businesses are accepting of the usefulness of the English language as a means to communicate to their potential customers, some of whom may well be 'native', or indigenous speakers. Others, however, while also native, are of South Asian heritage. What this demonstrates, or rather signifies, is a shift in mindset. Today, South Asians are educated and socialised through the English language. To ignore this fact would be impossible, not to mention, from a business point of view, counter productive. In short, the signage is emblematic of social change and, contrary to the still dominant discourse around social cohesion, is indicative of the extent to which Bradford's Muslims are integrated.

## Architecture

The different faiths operative in the area are routinely signalled in the architecture of places of worship that would be regarded as abnormal and highly problematic in other European countries. The ascendancy of the Christian faith during the nineteenth century as an integral element of the building of British Imperial identity is highly evident in the substantial churches in the area, with their spires and towers asserting their presence against the skyline. In contemporary Bradford as a whole, and in Manningham also, this Christian architectural hegemony is now challenged by the visible growth of substantial mosques. Granted, some of these are extant Victorian buildings including a pub and an industrial building that have been converted for new use, but others are robust assertions of the substantial presence of Islam as an inherent part of the social infrastructure of the area. The distinctly *Muslim* identity of these places of worship is further underlined by the minarets and cupolas that introduce an 'Eastern' architectural presence into the urban eyeline (Fig. 4). Unlike the situation in other European countries, and other European cities, this significant change to the built environment of Bradford attracted no substantial resistance from the resident majority population (Husband 1994). With the mosques of course has come also the call to prayer and indeed a *soundmark* (Bull 2000; 2008) of this area might be regarded as being the call to prayer: listened for by the substantial number of practicing Muslims, an ambient statement of their legitimate presence for many more; and doubtless for some majority white residents a less



than welcome reminder of how extensively the demography and characteristics of the area has changed over the last fifty years.

**Figure 4. Jamia Masjid Hanfia Mosque, Carlisle Road.**



Walking the streets of Manningham one does not encounter the hustle and bustle of crowded pavements that might be invited by thinking of other inner-city areas of multiethnic settlement. For example, a main shopping street such as Oak Lake does not echo to the contested voice of street traders and there is no cacophony of people idling away the time on a busy street. The street is not crowded and its dominant ethnic demography is signalled by the variety of fruits on display outside grocers, by the signage of businesses, and by the clothing of many of the local population, where many of the men will be wearing *salwar kameez* and the bright clothes of the women and young girls wearing 'traditional clothing' signals the ethnic diversity of the area.

Thus Manningham is an inner-city area with a distinct ethnic profile in which the built environment is composed essentially of nineteenth century stock that has in many instances been radically internally modified for contemporary use. It is a multiethnic ethnic area with a marked predominance of people of South Asian heritage; but importantly it cannot be argued that this is an area which in its dominant streetscape can be said to exclude the majority white population of wider Bradford. In its built environment and in its banal daily habitus this is an inner city area that stands in remarkable contrast to the stereotypical expectations that would

come with the label 'Muslim ghetto' (see, for example Wacquant 2008, for a critique of the use and abuse of the term ghetto in the European context).

### Local Politics and Policy

Manningham, as we have seen, is an inner-city area that has had a particular stereotypical reputation attached to it, whilst currently being a neighbourhood whose banal daily operation stands in marked contrast to that reputation. Since our concern is with the action of a local council in choosing to respond to the ethnic demography of the locale it may be worth considering how this current context has emerged. Certainly we would have to start by acknowledging the fact that Bradford has over the last five decades demonstrated a capacity to develop actively a multicultural policy. Whilst there have been very significant swings in policy as local council control has changed between parties, where under some ruling groups it could not be said that a positive commitment to multiculturalism was a defining feature of their policy, the demography of Bradford has meant that the 'Asian vote' has for a long time been a significant feature of local elections. Recognition of the intersection of the challenge of ethnic diversity and of concentrations of areas of deprivation has shaped Bradford local authority's concerns in engaging with its inner city social and physical fabric, and they have been active in drawing upon central government funds that might benefit their local population (They have also engaged with the challenge of white working class estates elsewhere in the metropolitan area). Thus the physical and social fabric of Manningham described above is to some extent a reflection of past and current local authority policies: where as we have seen Government programmes such as *New deal for Communities* (1998), *Sure Start* (1999) and the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (2001) provided a context where resources could be targeted into inner-city Bradford. Bradford Council has been very aware of its multiethnic demography and of the challenges that come with it, and consequently the initiative described below must be seen as being consistent with an established policy capacity, rather than as a unique and almost random event.

### The Mughal Garden

Lister Park (Fig. 5) stands on the east side of Manningham and was a classic example of Victorian urban planning with the creation of a large landscaped park in which the local population could pursue the benefits of 'rational recreation' (Bailey 1987).



Figure 5. Cartwright Hall seen on entering Lister Park. Photo: C. Husband.



By the late 1980s many of its amenities had become eroded and were looking increasingly shabby and had lost much of their attraction for many potential users. It was in this context that Bradford Council considered its redevelopment. The Mughal Garden was developed as part of a successful £4.2 million restoration scheme for the park, with the support of a £3.2 million grant from the *Heritage Lottery Fund-Urban Parks Programme*, awarded in the autumn of 1996. In the original proposal document submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Bradford Council stated that:

...The Mughal garden, like Mughal architecture is a synthesis between Islamic and Hindu architectural styles prevalent in the Indian sub-continent... Mughal Gardens were invariably square or rectangular, subdivide into smaller square parterres with tall imposing entrance ways.

The primary feature or focal point of the gardens centred on stone or brick edged canals falling from various levels within the gardens in smooth cascades or rushing over carved water chutes...

These magnificent gardens which form the basis of the horticultural heritage of India and South Asia are remembered and spoken of with great affection by the Asian population who have moved to the British Isles and made their home in this country.

The inclusion of a Mughal garden within the proposals for Lister Park is fundamental to creating harmony between the cultural exhibits in Cartwright hall, the park and the

culturally diverse community in Manningham and the wider area of Bradford. (Proposal 17)

These quotations from Proposal 17 which set out the case for the Mughal Garden in the Council's submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund provide an insight into the linkages that are being suggested in pursuing this initiative. Firstly it is an expression of South Asian architectural heritage which is likely to have cultural resonance with the established South Asian communities of Manningham and Bradford. Additionally, to the extent that 'the Raj' has a significant cultural presence in the majority English culture this architectural feature would not be entirely alien to the majority eye. Indeed the incorporation of water features into the formal gardens of European and British aristocracy would render such a feature both familiar and attach to it a cache of elitism. The existing flowerbeds of Lister Park would also provide an initial context that would in themselves carry echoes of the wider structure of a Mughal garden. Thus the addition of a Mughal garden to an extant Victorian public park could reasonably be seen as both complementing and enhancing the existing terrain, whilst simultaneously making an explicit and concrete gesture of publicly recognizing the cultural diversity of the surrounding area. In this, the initiative both responded to, and addressed, some of the demand characteristics of the Heritage Lottery fund criteria for applicants, which required that applicants should demonstrate how the project would restore the 'heritage asset', whilst also demonstrating innovation and creativity. Thus the Mughal Garden was included in the application to the Heritage lottery fund as a new feature that satisfied the need for innovation, whilst simultaneously having synergy with the design of the adjacent formal gardens and with the legacy of parkland features provided by Victorian industrialists in Britain, and the Mughal emperors in the Asian sub-continent.

There was perhaps a gentle irony in the fact that the wealth of a nineteenth-century textile barons, operating within the beneficial commercial context of the still lucrative Imperial swathe of British political and economic power, created the wealth that provided the basis for making the park available to Bradford's citizens. The grandeur of nineteenth century British wealth is still expressed in the architecture of Cartwright Hall within the park, and the Imperial British engagement with the nature and social roles of the garden in India (Herbert 2011) had resulted in an importation of plants and garden topography into Britain: a process of horticultural incorporation that had its precedents from the seventeenth century onwards. Thus the late-twentieth-century construction of a Mughal garden in Lister Park forms a complex cultural linkage with a shared past. Under the Mughal dynasty gardens such as this were associated variously with joyous sensualism, and with political and religious symbolism. That the construction of Mughal garden in Bradford would require some sensitive adjustment to its Indian precedents was in itself a continuation of a Mughal tradition where, as Herbert (2011, 206–216) points out

Mughal gardens in their Indian development were prone to adaptation to the local climate, terrain and botanical possibilities. There was in fact something of a suspended temporal synergy in bringing a Mughal garden to the heart of a city and a park that owed so much to British Imperial power.

This initiative did not, however, come out of a planning vacuum, and was not the expression of an individual executive whim. In the words of a senior planning officer in Bradford Council, interviewed in July 2011:

Consultation on the Lister Park scheme was one of the largest consultation exercises undertaken by the Park Service. Individual letters and questionnaires were distributed to all properties within a 1.5 kilometre radius of the park. The Telegraph and Argus [Bradford's local newspaper with a very high level of penetration into the population of greater Bradford], provided support through editorials and appeals for old photographs of the park. Displays were also held at the Bradford Festival Mela [an annual South Asian musical and cultural festival], and the proposals were discussed at community meetings and Neighbourhood Forums.

A key element in the development of the proposal for a Mughal garden revolved around the physical space that was under consideration for redevelopment. The area in question was relatively close to Cartwright Hall, and hence a potentially easily accessible area that would have a natural flow of potential visitors in those who came to visit the museum and art gallery. Just as significant was the fact that this rectangular piece of land was, at the time, an eyesore. Originally part of the open parkland, it had in the 1930s been converted to a hard area to be used by children on bicycles and roller skates: and as a site for a miniature railway. At the time of the bid the area was used as an overspill car park for events taking place at Cartwright Hall. The typical dimensions of a Mughal garden proved to be a most opportune fit with this unfortunate tract of land. As the bid document was pleased to assert:

The linear site criteria provides an ideal opportunity to create a Mughal garden. Utilizing research on numerous gardens in the Indian sub-continent the design reflects many of the important components, whilst complementing Cartwright Hall. (Proposal 17)

Thus the proposed Mughal garden not only met the criterion of being 'innovatory', it also very directly addressed the concern with widening participation in the civic life of British cities and in addressing the demands of cultural diversity; which at that time still enjoyed a wider political salience in British governmental policy than might now be found in a policy environment suffused by the new received wisdom of 'the end of multiculturalism;' and the new assertive assimilationist rhetoric from central government (Husband & Alam 2011; Lentin & Titley 2011). Additionally, whether intentionally or not, this proposal also appealed to architectural and design professionalism in finding an innovatory and creative use of an 'awkward plot'.



The extensive consultation process doubtless added significantly to the credibility of the bid; but it also was central to the local council 'owning' this initiative and being confident in its potential. Not that the feedback was universally positive. Some of the elder majority white population saw this proposal as turning an established, if underused, element of Bradford's fabric into 'an Asian park' and as a capitulation to the erosion of whiteness and Christianity in British life. In other words there was evidence of the symbolic threat which so often is found when collective assets are being allocated to specific purposes in multiethnic urban locations (Stephan & Stephan 1996; Stephan *et al.* 1999). In the context of a city like Bradford where the Islamic presence had become a feature of national, as well as local, Islamophobic discourse; and where Manningham itself had specifically attracted attention as a supposedly classic instance of Muslim inner-city tension (even prior to the 2001 riots), such sentiments were to be expected. There were those who asserted that Manningham was in essence a 'no-go area' for the majority population, and that the garden would be trashed by the local youth. However, the overall impact of the consultation, and the developmental research, was highly positive. So much so that it persuaded the planning team of the 'added value' that the Mughal Garden could offer the total refurbishment plan; as a consequence, they decided to shift additional resources within the bid to ensuring a high quality outcome to the Mughal Garden (Fig. 6). In its execution the Mughal Garden employed York Stone for the extensive hard design, thus incorporating local materials, and value, in the construction of a South Asian cultural statement within a large Northern inner-city public space.

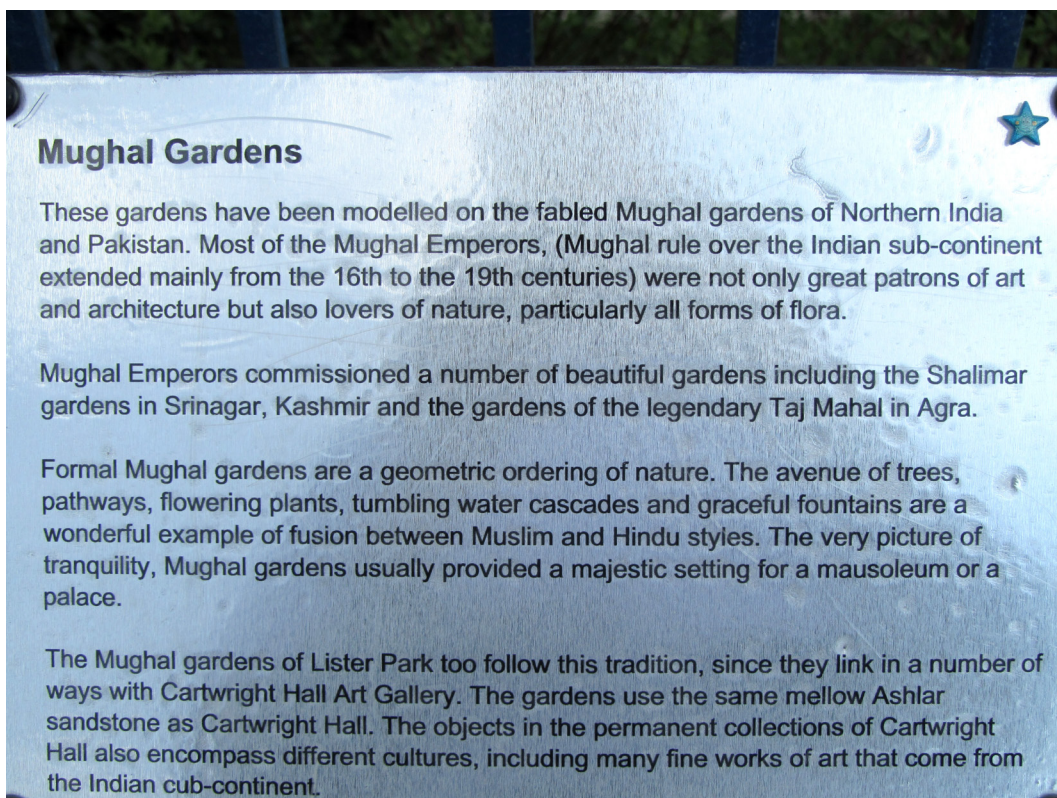
**Figure 6. A view of the Mughal Garden. Photo: C. Husband.**



## Follow Through and Outcomes

Upon its completion the whole of the Lister Park development was widely viewed as an outstanding success; and its merit was recognised in a number of awards. The Mughal Garden has made a significant difference to the feel and experience of Lister Park. No longer is the park a domain of uniquely English provenance, which admittedly offers a spacious and beautiful retreat from urban housing and hectic traffic which has generic properties. Now the local, and not so local, South Asian population on entering the park can easily find that they are *specifically* acknowledged as culturally present in the physical topography of the park. Not only architecturally present, but there is signage which explains the heritage of this distinctive feature of the park (Fig. 7). For the non-South Asian visitor there is a possibility to share a sense that here they are able to share something that is distinctively representative of the ethnic diversity that defines Bradford. Hopefully, not something that is *theirs*, but rather something that is *ours*.

Figure 7. A sign adjacent to the Mughal Garden. Photo: C. Husband.



The intended significance of the Mughal Garden is designed into its physical structure and planting, and the aesthetic they represent. This perhaps assumes a knowledge and appreciation of this design and of the territorialized cultural values that it is intended to invoke. In essence, in order to appreciate fully the symbolic content of the Mughal Garden, it is possible to argue that the observer is required to have a sense of the 'historicity' of this design. It is consequently questionable to



what extent this can be assumed of the range of users of Lister Park. It can thus be asked whether, if it were not labelled as the Mughal Garden with an explanatory sign, the architectural features themselves would be sufficient to convey the symbolic reference to a South Asian Mughal tradition, and hence signal the intentional valorisation of the local 'migrant' culture in the heart of Bradford. For the majority of Bradfordians the answer is very probably 'no'. Hence the signage is significant in establishing the identity of this addition within the park and contributing to its general usage among the local population.

It would be naïve and hopelessly optimistic, however, to believe that a change in the physical features of the park would in themselves be sufficient to carry forward a dramatic change in the demographic profile of the park's users. Other things have happened. Just as the presence of appropriate expertise in South Asian culture and a creative mindset facilitated the initial spark for this innovation, so too the experience of developing the Mughal Garden has had an impact on the relationship between the Park Service and Cartwright Hall, the art gallery within the park. Whereas in the past these two elements of Bradford Council's administration existed in relatively parallel universes, having little formal contact, there is now a much more open synergy between the two, with, for example, exhibits from within Cartwright Hall being brought out into the park.

In addition, a health initiative developed within the local Primary Care Trust, concerned with the problems of diabetes and other health issues in the local South Asian population, introduced a programme called *Walking For Health*. An element of this programme introduced 'walk leaders' who brought South Asian women and elders into the park to encourage them to get into a routine of taking exercise. One feature of morning walks through the park now is to see South Asian women and men walking. The park has rediscovered the Victorian joys of 'promenading'. Similarly the new ambiance of the park has enabled it to become an attractive locale for school trips of young children and for organised trips of people who are in some way disabled. The demographic profile of the park users has changed dramatically since its refurbishment.

The current Lister Park, and the Mughal Garden within it, has added significantly to the considerable, and politically disturbing, misfit between the stereotypical public perception of Manningham and the substantive reality of its physical and social existence.

## Conclusion

This paper has explored the construction of a Mughal garden within an inner city civic park as a deliberate policy initiative to reflect the ethnic demography of the

inner city area in the physical environment of a major neighbourhood amenity. It cannot be said that the introduction of a culturally salient physical element into the refurbishment of Lister Park was in itself a sufficient basis for encouraging the local South Asian population to start to use the park in increasing numbers. But it can be suggested that the introduction of this element into the planned refurbishment of the park initiated a distinctive culturally sensitive edge to the whole process of repositioning the park in the lives of the neighbourhood that had continuing effects. The dynamics between different local council teams changed in the process of developing this initiative, and the Mughal Garden is a substantive and not unimportant statement to the city's wider population of the city council's commitment to respecting and reflecting diversity in their policies.

There remains a suspicion that for some of those citizens elsewhere in Bradford who take some pride in the existence of the refurbished Lister Park, and possibly occasionally travel to use it, that they somehow fail to see it as being in Manningham. The stereotype may still be stronger than the reality.

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